DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 184 760 RC 011 938

TITLE	The Primary Itinerant Teacher Service in South-West Queensland. Priority Country Area Program Evaluation Series: Report No. 1.
INSTITUTION	Priority Country Area Program Office, Brisbane (Australia).
SPONS AGENCY	Australian Schools Commission, Canberra.
PUB DATE	Feb 79
NOTE	28p.; For related documents see RC 011 938-40.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Correspondence Study; *Delivery Systems; Demonstration Programs; Elementary Education; *Home Visits; *Itinerant Teachers; Mobile Educational Services; Outreach Programs; *Pilot Projects; Program Descriptions; Program Evaluation; Rural Areas; *Rural Education; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS	*Australia (Queensland)

ABSTRACT

Interviews, project documents, and parent responses provided information for an interim evaluation of the Primary Itinerant Teacher Service, a pilot project designed to improve educational opportunities of children in the South-West Priority Country Area. In 1978, 3 itinerant teams of 2 teachers each contacted 238 students in 164 families and provided the following services: (1) visiting, teaching, and testing pupils on primary correspondence courses and diagnosing their problems; (2) providing group experiences for pupils through 5-day mini-schools and activity days; (3) assisting, advising, and encouraging Home Supervisors; and (4) providing written reports on pupils for the Primary Correspondence School (PCS) and the School of the Air. Forty-five percent of staff time was spent in administrative activities at the central office and 55 percent was spent out on itinerary. The average contact time per week was 24 hours; the average travel time was over 18 hours. The itinerant teachers, the PCS, parents, and community groups perceived the program as valuable and needed. Areas of concern are the relatively high turnover of itinerant staff and the need for more staff to provide increased student contact. Further evaluation should focus on the quality of the service and the impact of the itinerants on the network of educational support services for isolated families. (JH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

PRIORITY COUNTRY AREA PROGRAM EVALUATION SERIES

ED184760

RC011938

SCOPE OF INTEREST NOTICE

The ERIC Facility has assigned this document for processing to: RC PS

In our judgement, this document is also of interest to the clearinghouses noted to the right. Indexing should reflect their special points of view.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Clifford Fowler

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

PRIORITY COUNTRY AREA PROGRAM EVALUATION SERIES: REPORT NO. 1

The Primary Itinerant Teacher Service in South-West Queensland

Clifford F. Fowler
Evaluation Co-ordinator
Priority Country Area Program
G.P.O. Box 1605
Brisbane, Q. 4001

February 1979

I—80128/9/79—1M—P/L

3

MAR 1 4 1980

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Purpose of this Report	3
Background	3
Purpose of the Itinerant Teacher Service	3
Evaluation Approach and Methodology	4
Orientation	5
Scope of Operations	5
Allocation of Time	6
Home Visits	8
Activity Days	13
Mini-Schools	14
Student Reports and the Primary Correspondence School	16
Reactions to the Service	19
Constraints and Problem Areas	20
Conclusions	22
Issues	23

2—80128

INTRODUCTION

In its 1977–79 report the Schools Commission suggested 'that students in country areas may be disadvantaged compared to urban dwellers because of additional factors in the variety of experiences and opportunities available to such students'. As a consequence of this concern for the problems of country children the Commission added a new element to the Disadvantaged Schools Program for 1977, sub-titled 'Disadvantaged Country Areas'. The funding thus made available was intended to finance the piloting of schemes designed to improve the opportunities of children in such areas. From the information collected about the pilot schemes initiated in each State, it is hoped that strategies for improving educational services available in all country areas will be devised.

In Queensland, the term Priority Country Area is used to describe those country areas which have been identified on the basis of guidelines supplied by the Schools Commission and approved by the Commonwealth Minister for Education on the recommendation of the State Minister of Education. To date, two such areas have been declared – one in the south-west of Queensland and one in central Queensland.

In 1977, a committee representing state and non-state educational interests was formed by the State Minister of Education to administer the Priority Country Area Program in Queensland. This program, which is currently funded to the extent of approximately $1 million a year by the Schools Commission, is presently responsible for over twenty separate projects and employs more than thirty full-time staff. For further details of the overall program reference should be made to the annual reports obtainable from the Priority Country Area Program Office, G.P.O. Box 1605, Brisbane, 4001.

Towards the end of 1977 an Evaluation Committee was appointed to assist the Priority Country Area Program Committee in making recommendations about projects to the State Minister of Education. The committee is:

J. Fitzgerald, Staff Inspector (Planning and Services)
R. Boxall, Senior Research Officer (Curriculum Branch)
S. Parry, Principal Guidance Officer (Guidance Branch)
P. Varley, Senior Research Officer (Research Branch)
P. Corkeron, Planning Officer (Queensland Catholic Education Office)
J. Ferguson, General Secretary (Priority Country Area Program – ex officio)

To assist the committee in its task of evaluating the various initiatives undertaken a full-time evaluation co-ordinator was appointed in November 1978.

The committee has formulated criteria for determining evaluation priorities and the nature of the evaluation to be undertaken. Currently being produced are a series of Project Profiles, which supply overview information on projects, and a series of formal evaluation reports such as this one.

This first report in the evaluation series deals with the Itinerant Teacher Service. It represents one of the major initiatives of the Priority Country Area Program.

J E Fitzgerald

J. E. FITZGERALD
Staff Inspector
Planning and Services
(Chairman – Evaluation Committee)

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report is intended to supply a preliminary description of the primary itinerant service, based upon the information collected so far, and includes comments on perceived benefits and problem areas. Although much of the evidence presented is of a highly subjective nature, where numerical data were available these have been included. The report also attempts to indicate areas where further information could be sought as the evaluation proceeds.

BACKGROUND

During 1977 the Priority Country Area Program (hereafter P.C.A.P.) provided the necessary funds for an Itinerant Teacher Service in the South-West Priority Country Area. When the Primary Itinerant Service commenced operations in June 1977, with two teachers based in Charleville, it was the first of the P.C.A.P. initiatives to take the field. In August 1977, operations were expanded to include a Secondary Itinerant Service.*

In June 1978 the recruitment of extra staff increased the field strength of the Primary Itinerant Service to six teachers, with two additional teams based in Cunnamulla and St George. When one of the itinerants resigned in October 1978, the field strength was reduced to five for the remainder of the year. At the present time, all primary itinerant staff are employed by the Catholic Education Office, on behalf of the Joint Committee and, because of the pilot nature of the program, are employed on temporary rather than permanent conditions of service. As with other P.C.A.P. staff in the South-West Priority Country Area they work under the supervision of the Project Director, based in Charleville, who is in turn answerable to the Regional Director (South-West Region) and to the Joint Committee.

Each itinerant team is supplied with a sedan type motor vehicle, fitted with a transceiver radio for emergency use, and has a basic stock of educational materials and equipment.

PURPOSE OF THE ITINERANT TEACHER SERVICE

In the P.C.A.P. Annual Report for 1977 the purpose of the Itinerant Teacher Service is described as follows:

- *to assist Home Supervisors with the education of children on Correspondence Education;* and
- *to assist teachers in small primary schools which either retain a Year 8 class or have children on Secondary Correspondence attending them.*

Based upon the former of these two purposes, the primary itinerants have developed a role which encompasses:

(a) visiting, teaching and testing pupils on primary correspondence courses and diagnosing their problems;

* This will form the subject of a separate, preliminary report.

(b) providing group experiences for pupils through Mini-Schools and Activity Days;
(c) assisting, advising and encouraging Home Supervisors; and
(d) providing written reports on pupils for the Primary Correspondence School and the School of the Air.*

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

A common evaluation approach is that of attempting to assess whether or not a project has been successful in achieving its original, specified objectives. Since, however, the wording of the stated purpose of the itinerant teacher service is such as to virtually ensure success, the approach adopted here will be to examine how well the service is working and how it compares with possible alternatives. Consequently, the evaluation plan incorporates:

(a) an emphasis on the processes involved as well as on the outcomes;
(b) concern for program activities rather than program intents;
(c) the collection of information from a variety of sources, using a variety of methods; and
(d) provision for directing responses to audience requirements for information.

Information for this interim report has been obtained in the following ways:

(i) from progress reports supplied by P.C.A.P. staff;
(ii) from interviews with the primary itinerant teachers, the Project Director and the staff of the Primary Correspondence School;
(iii) by analysis of the documentation at the Charleville Education Office and P.C.A.P. Headquarters, and of reports on students received by the Primary Correspondence School; and
(iv) from attendance at Local Advisory Committee and Isolated Children's Parents' Association meetings where the activities of Primary Itinerants have been discussed.

As a check on the accuracy of interpretation of descriptive material, relevant sections of the draft have been discussed with the principal informants.

During the next stage of evaluation it is envisaged that further information will be collected through:

(i) participant observation of the itinerant service in action;
(ii) questionnaires to Home Supervisors; and
(iii) interviews with School of the Air staff, Home Supervisors and pupils.

As the evaluation proceeds it is hoped to improve the acceptability of subjective data through comparing the findings obtained by one method with evidence from alternative sources or instruments.

Finally, in looking for alternatives with which to compare the Primary Itinerant Service, the Mobile Classroom, now operating in the Central Priority Country Area, immediately comes to mind. In a later section of the present report, some tentative comparisons are made between the two operations in relation to student reports

*N.B. The itinerant service is intended to support and supplement existing services such as the Primary Correspondence School and the School of the Air; in no sense is it seen as an alternative.

supplied to the Primary Correspondence School. If and when a full evaluation of the Mobile Classroom is undertaken it is suggested that this comparison could be usefully extended.

ORIENTATION

It has been the practice for itinerant teachers to undergo a two or three week orientation period in Brisbane before going into the field. Such orientation courses are intended to familiarise the itinerants with those services offered by the Department of Education and other relevant departments and organisations which could be of use to them in their work and to provide them with the necessary contacts to make use of those services. In addition, the orientation process is designed to help new recruits gain an overall perspective of the Priority Country Area Program and its organisation as a joint venture of the state and non-state education authorities. Comments from the itinerant teachers indicated that they were in general agreement upon the overall usefulness of such orientation experience. One teacher, recruited in May 1978, described the orientation experience as follows:

> *We went around to various branches, we went to the Curriculum Branch, went to Red Comb House, to the library, to see what things were available to us, we went to the Primary Correspondence School for a full week and we went to the Isolated Children's Unit for quite some time in Toowong, and Secondary Correspondence as well.*
>
> *I think it was very useful. At the time it didn't seem particularly relevant, but when you got in the field and you wanted information you had all this to rely on – people's names and telephone numbers whom you could contact. That sort of thing was very useful.*

With regard to the various components of the orientation experience, the itinerant teachers offered the following comments:

- *I think the Primary Correspondence School was the most useful.*
- *Secondary Correspondence, that day or half day there, wasn't really (useful), because we didn't come across any secondary correspondence children.*

There was also general agreement amongst the teachers interviewed that the opportunity for contact with experienced itinerants, before commencing field operations, was extremely helpful.

SCOPE OF OPERATIONS

During 1978 the primary itinerant service was endeavouring to cater for over 230 primary correspondence school children, involving more than 160 families, scattered throughout the South-West Priority Country Area. The total area involved exceeds 320,000 km^2 and extends approximately 750 km from east to west and 400 km from north to south. Prior to June 1978, with only two primary itinerants operating out of Charleville, coverage of

such a vast area was necessarily limited. The following extract is taken from a report, provided by the Charleville-based teachers, on the itinerant service in 1977:

> *Since 11th July, 60 pupils have been contacted through Home Visits, 38 through Activity Days (16 had no Home Visit), and 11 in the Mini-school at 'Allandale' (3 had no Home Visits) – a total of 79 pupils at Quilpie, 'Yandarlo', Eulo and Langlo Crossing.*

The total number of primary correspondence children recorded in the south-west area at that time was 214, so that only 37 per cent can be said to have experienced any form of contact with the itinerant service during 1977, and only 28 per cent received home visits.

From June 1978 onwards, with the arrival in the field of four more primary itinerant teachers, it became possible to form three itinerant teams, of two teachers each, based in Charleville, St George and Cunnamulla. Responsibilities were then allocated as shown in the following table.

Table 1: Itinerant Teams and Their Responsibilities

Base	Team	Number of Students	Number of Families
Charleville	2 female teachers	81	54
St George	2 male teachers	81	56
Cunnamulla	1 male, 1 female	76	54
TOTALS	6 teachers	238	164

Referring to this improved situation in Newsletter No. 5/78 the Project Director commented:

> *With these three teams strategically placed throughout our area we are now in a position to offer a meaningful service to Primary Correspondence children – and their home supervisors.*

One problem encountered by field staff has been that, owing to uneven population densities, an entirely satisfactory distribution of responsibilities is hard to achieve. Thus efforts to equalise numbers between centres have resulted in certain anomalies, with some families appreciably nearer to Charleville being served by itinerants based in Cunnamulla or St George.

ALLOCATION OF TIME

Information supplied by the Charleville-based team gives some indication of how the itinerant teachers spend their time. The period covered is from 12 June 1978, when the two teachers concerned commenced field operations, to 14 December 1978. The following table shows how the 125 working days in that period of time were occupied.

Table 2: Amount of Time Spent by the Charleville Itinerant Team on Various Activities in the Six Months from June to December 1978

Activity/Location	Number of Days	Percentage of Time
Administration, Charleville Office	56	45
Home Visits	39	31
Mini-Schools	14	11
Summer Schools	10	8
Various Meetings, etc.	6	5
TOTALS	125	100

It will be noted that, of the overall time, 45 per cent was spent in the Charleville office (at Dalton House) and 55 per cent out on itinerary. Commenting on this ratio, the teachers stated:

> *We both feel that the percentage of days on itinerary would have been greater had we not had such a wet season.*

This opinion is supported by the Project Director.

The following extract from their end of year report indicates the degree of contact achieved by the Charleville-based itinerants during this six month period:

> *With home visits we have seen 43 families (62 children). Two-thirds of these children also attended one of our mini-schools. In our area, we have been unable to get to 11 families (19 children) this year. Most of these were on planned itineraries which had to be abandoned.*

Thus 77 per cent of the children in their area received home visits and 53 per cent attended mini-schools.

With regard to the 56 days spent in the office, the teachers described their duties in the following words:

> *Time at Dalton House has been spent in writing individual reports on the children visited, to send to the Primary Correspondence School and to School of the Air, work preparation for some visits and mini-schools, and arranging further itineraries.*

Further information concerning reports supplied to the Primary Correspondence School and the School of the Air appears in a later section.

Mini-Schools and Home Visits, which occupied 53 days (42 per cent) of the itinerants' time, are also described in separate sections of this report, together with Activity Days, a feature of the itinerant service which does not appear in Table 2.

During the remaining 13 per cent of their time the Charleville-based itinerants spent 10 days teaching at the Charters Towers Summer School for isolated children in northern Queensland and 6 days attending various meetings, such as the School of the Air Annual Sports.

HOME VISITS

When the P.C.A.P. primary itinerant service was inaugurated in June 1977, with two teachers based in Charleville, operations commenced with a program of home visits to primary correspondence students and their home supervisors. Since that beginning the importance of the Home Visit as a central feature of the itinerant service has become firmly established. It was, for instance, the major activity common to all three itinerant teams during 1978. Discussion with itinerant teachers also revealed that, although there were some differences between teams in the organisational approach to home visits, all itinerants were agreed that the purpose of the home visits was to provide professional assistance to both students and supervisors in their efforts to cope with education by correspondence. This was expressed by one teacher as follows:

> *. . . we felt that the twofold purpose was to help the home supervisor to become more efficient and to help the child . . .*

The differences in organisational approach to home visits, mentioned above were summarised by the Project Director:

> *The kind of modus operandi does vary as from the St George-based team to the Cunnamulla-based team to the Charleville-based team. I think it varies in response to the distribution of the correspondence kiddies in the respective areas they serve. Things like this happen – let's take the St George-based team – when they go out on itinerary, rather frequently they find that there are two homesteads rather close together and to them it suggests the possibility of one of their team of two dropping off at the first homestead on itinerary whilst the second goes on to homestead number two. It's probable that they have done this to a larger extent than the Charleville-based team, and it is also probable that the Cunnamulla people, whilst there was a team of two, would have been developing that approach to the same extent as it is currently being developed in St George . . . Beyond doubt there's considerable worth, I think, in the team of two splitting when these two ports of call are rather close together to enable more economical and effective use of teacher time in the face of pupil--teacher ratio considerations.*

In the first instance, itineraries for home visits were generally prepared using a list of students supplied by the Primary Correspondence School and an area map. Also, with only one vehicle available to each team, the teachers normally followed a joint itinerary, travelling together most of the time, a practice which was, in any case, encouraged for security reasons where female itinerants were involved:

> *Sometimes, quite often in the beginning, we just had one child 'cause a lot of our properties are fairly far apart, you know. In only a few areas they're close together where you can ask them to bring the children, and we didn't*

feel like splitting up in the beginning 'cause we felt we should meet everyone in their homes first.

As teachers became more familiar with their areas, it sometimes proved possible for the team to split up, with one teacher going on to another property, or alternatively to combine two families at one location:

We split up a few times when properties were close together, like 5 or 6 miles apart, but we always stayed together at night and we usually brought children together at a property if there was only one child there – we'd contact a nearby property and say 'Could you have your child at such a property too?'

The Project Director also commented on the advantages of bringing families together for home visits:

In part this is a matter of getting to know and getting intimate knowledge of the topography and of the distribution pattern of the families, the kiddies and the parents. When our itinerant services attain some stability in terms of the length of time the teachers stay with us I would venture to say that it will develop rather firmly along those lines, bringing kiddies together in groups where parents are acceptive of this – it does have the opportunity to afford the kiddies the further socialisation of group work too and it does have more effective utilisation of teacher time built into it.

In general, the teams tried to plan their itineraries from six to ten weeks in advance and notified families of proposed visits either by telephone or through School of the Air broadcasts. Up to the present, the initiative for home visits appears to have come entirely from the itinerant teachers, and no instances were recorded of visits in response to requests from parents.

The following details, extracted from their diaries by the Charleville itinerants, give some indication of how the teachers spend their working hours during weeks devoted to home visits:

Table 3: Analysis of Contact Time, Travel Time and Number of Students, During Two Weeks of Home Visits, with Two Teachers Working Together Throughout

Date	Place Visited	Team Contact Hours	Travel Hours	Number of Students	Total Working Hours
11.09.78	'Cooma' Eromanga	2.5	5.5	1	8
12.09.78	'Monler' Eromanga	5	2	2	7
13.09.78	'Panjee' Eromanga	3.5	4.5	2	8
14.09.78	'Corowa Downs' Eromanga	2.5	2	4	9.5
	'Yapunyah' Eromanga	5			
15.09.78	'Raymore' Eromanga	4	6	2	10
	Totals for week	22.5	20.0	11	42.5

Continued on next page

Table 3 continued

Date	Place Visited	Team Contact Hours	Travel Hours	Number of Students	Total Working Hours
02.10.78	Travel to 'Trinidad'	–	7	–	7
03.10.78	'Trinidad' Windorah 'Budgerygar' Windorah	6.5	2.5	2	9
04.10.78	Oakham St. Windorah	5.5	2.5	3	8
05.10.78	'Earlstown' Quilpie	7	1	2	8
06.10.78	'Bundinderry' Quilpie	6.5	3.5	6	10
	Totals for week	25.5	16.5	13	42.0
	Totals for 2 weeks	48.0	36.5	24	84.5
	Weekly Average	24.0	18.25	12	42.25
	Percentage Contact/Travel	57	43	–	–

It may be noted that the ratio of contact time to travel was 57 per cent to 43 per cent and that the average contact time per week was 24 hours, which compares favourably with the amount of contact time achieved by primary teachers in the normal school situation. In addition, the teachers spent an average of over 18 hours per week in travelling. The teachers themselves supplied the following comments:

> *As many of the areas we visit are quite distant from Charleville a great deal of time is spent in travelling. We attempt to travel from one property to the next in the late afternoon, so that it is possible, in most cases, to work a normal school day with the children. On our initial home visits this year many of our evenings have involved discussions on education.*

With regard to teacher/student contact, calculations based on the figures in Table 3 indicate an average teacher/student ratio of 1:1.3 in the home visit situation.

Reporting on their efforts during 1977, the original Charleville itinerants produced the following summary of those features of the service related to home visits:

(a) Present learning/teaching problems faced by pupil or Home Supervisor can be worked on.
(b) Demonstration lessons are presented for the Home Supervisor.
(c) Home Supervisors can be shown where current skills being learned fit into curriculum.
(d) Organisation of daily schedules related to children's age levels and concentration spans.
(e) Children's standards can be assessed and –
  (i) areas of weakness discerned with suitable programs for correction given for practice, and
  (ii) the pressures placed by over anxious parent- teachers assuaged when the child is shown to be working well.

(f) Opportunity to familiarise parents and pupils with –
- *(i) resources available through the P.C.S.,*
- *(ii) additional materials available as aids to the teaching process,*
- *(iii) funds available through government and other funding agencies, and*
- *(iv) resources available through other sources (e.g., Scoutreach, Lone Guide).*

(g) Requests from P.C.S. teachers can be emphasised to help overcome lack of 'face to face' communication with each child's teacher e.g., (Itinerant teacher helps in the preparation of a tape of the child's reading to be sent to the School.)

During home visits the itinerant teachers were particularly concerned with providing assistance appropriate to the needs of individual families. The ascertainment of such needs was frequently approached, in the first instance, by questioning the Home Supervisor. As one teacher explained:

> *First of all we would ask if there were any problems, what would they like us to do. And parents would usually tell us, he's having trouble with this, this and this and we'd go over that.*

One area of parental concern identified by all three itinerant teams was the difficulty experienced by Home Supervisors in judging the comparative standard of their children's performance. The following comments from itinerant teachers illustrate this point:

> *I think the big problem is that parents want to know if their child is up to standard. Johnny in Grade 3 – is he coping well? If he is placed in a classroom would he keep up?*
>
> *They've got no way of comparing their child with anybody else.*
>
> *They all want you to compare them – how would my child be in a classroom?*
>
> *Some have been quite good, but mothers have been particularly worried about them.*

As a result of this concern, the itinerants see the reassurance and encouragement of Home Supervisors as an important aspect of their role:

> *Basically, being a confidence booster to the mother.*
>
> *. . . that's a big thing – keeping them happy in what they're doing.*

In assessing the attainment levels of students, the itinerant teachers use both formal and informal techniques. In addition to verbal questioning, both standardised tests and teacher produced tests, based upon work recently covered in the correspondence course, may be used. The information so obtained is used not only to reassure parents, but also in the diagnosis of learning difficulties, which can then be explained to Home Supervisors. As one primary itinerant put it:

> *Making them aware of any problem areas they should concentrate on.*

Where serious remedial problems are identified, such cases are referred to the Isolated Children's Special Education Unit at Toowong. A further use of information from these tests is in the completion of student report forms for the Primary Correspondence School and the School of the Air.

In the course of a visit a Home Supervisor may be helped in a number of different ways. On some occasions itinerant teachers have been able to observe the Home Supervisors in action and then offer advice on teaching methods, although more commonly such help has taken the form of demonstration teaching by the itinerants. The planning of timetables was one area where the itinerants judged they had been frequently consulted for assistance, and another was 'creative writing'.

With regard to the sort of help rendered to students, it appears that both itinerant teachers and parents may be agreed upon the importance of competence in the basic skills. In referring to this emphasis on work in the area of mathematics and language arts, one teacher remarked:

> *That's what the parents want you to do, anyway. They want the kids to be able to read and write and add up and that's basically it.*

In addition to this emphasis on the basic skills, the itinerant teachers have also tried to provide both assistance and enrichment in all subject areas:

> *We did the whole range of subjects – we've got art materials, we've got a slide projector and a film strip projector, we've used this lots of times for light entertainment for children before they go to bed. We've got some library books, we have a language arts kit that the Primary Correspondence gave us for beginning levels, we have a big chart-thing for read and tell – that's quite good, you know, things like this.*

In the course of their home visits the itinerant teachers encountered only a limited number of families experiencing real difficulties with correspondence education:

> *I'd say we came across four or five who really needed a lot of help – four or five families, but the majority were coping quite well.*

In those cases where problems were particularly severe, the itinerants have sometimes discussed with parents the possible advantages of seeking alternative forms of education for their children:

> *One family . . . that the correspondence school told us about, with four kiddies . . . we went out to see them and fortunately they weren't too far out of town and we managed to talk them into getting a bus into school . . . That was the only solution for that family because there's no way that mother could have taught them anything – she went to Grade 4 . . .*
>
> *Sometimes it's due to the mother's lack of education, she just cannot understand, and there's very little we can do in that sort of situation . . . We've recommended that the child be sent to school and it would be doing much better and some families took our advice – one family did.*

The itinerant teachers themselves are firmly agreed on the value of home visits as an important component of the itinerant service. This is illustrated, not only by the high proportion of their time devoted to home visits during 1978, but also by the following, typical comments:

. . . the home visits are really good — you need them.

Home visits are also very beneficial to home supervisors and to us, as there is time to give personal attention and we have the opportunity of assessing the child's progress.

With few exceptions, reactions to the home visitation program were perceived as highly favourable by the itinerant teachers:

They thanked us for everything. They said that they wished they'd had this service years ago. They're really very pleased with it. (Itinerant comment on parental reaction)

Very positive. (Itinerant comment on parental reaction)

They just loved the fact that you were a teacher and that you were coming and that they didn't have Mum for a day. We'd work 'til six or seven sometimes with the children — they were so keen to go on . . . (Itinerant comment on pupil reaction)

Thank you for keeping me sane. (Parental comment reported by itinerant teacher)

The following comments from teachers at the Primary Correspondence School also indicate a favourable reaction to home visits:

I couldn't possibly see any other way, or better way, of helping the children than a teacher visiting a child.

You can sense the sigh of relief. (Comment on parental reaction to home visits)

During 1978 the primary itinerants encountered only two families, in the whole of the south-west area, that apparently did not wish to participate in the home visit program. These two instances were described by the itinerant teachers involved in the following words:

We had one particular family who we tried to visit on three occasions and they always made excuses and we know that they were having a lot of trouble because we'd been told, but they didn't want us to visit — it was obvious.

Well, they were supposed to come across to the other property, but her sister with whom I went to visit said that her sister just didn't care about their schooling at all. That's the only one in our area.

ACTIVITY DAYS

The first Activity Days were pioneered by the original Charleville-based itinerant team during 1977. In a written report, prepared by one of the members of that team, features of the itinerant service were described as including:

Contact with pupils in Activity Day programs where several families bring their children together in a larger centre and children are given the opportunity to become involved in the kinds of social interaction not possible in their normal schooling situation by:
(a) meeting with other children living and learning under similar conditions;

(b) participation in several creative expression activities not worked through school papers but which occur in school based learning situations, such as folk dancing, drama exercises, singing, playing of musical instruments, group and individual art activities and story telling based on Australian literature.

During 1978, the idea has been further developed and adopted by the itinerant teams based in Cunnamulla and St George, who have organised three and two Activity Days respectively for students in their areas. The following comments are taken from interviews with those teachers:

And we had Activity Days during the year – we had three Activity Days – and they were really good. We had something like thirty-five children at the Eulo one and in the afternoon the school came down and school children joined in the sports. That was really successful.

Activity Days are another good idea because you get children together to give them the things that they don't get from the primary correspondence papers – the sport and the music and drama.

In Charleville, monthly Activity Days have been organised by the parents during 1978, but the teachers were of the opinion that additional help from the Charleville itinerants would be needed during 1979.

They just don't feel confident any more – the mothers have more or less exhausted their ideas and now they want to be able to use us, teachers at the State school, and at the School of the Air regularly, so that we take a day each.

MINI-SCHOOLS

The first mini-schools were organised by the original itinerant team during 1977 and, despite staff changes, have continued to feature in the program of the Charleville itinerants during 1978. Reference to Table 2 shows that, in the period covered by those figures, some 14 days were devoted to mini-schools. Further details of the three mini-schools which occupied those 14 days appear below:

Table 4: Details of the Mini-Schools Organised by the Charleville Itinerants Between 12 June and 14 December 1978

Dates	Location	Number of Days	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
16–20 October	'Allandale' Augathella	5	14	2
24–27 October	'Elverston' Wyandra	4	8	2
13–17 November	'Warrabin' Quilpie	5	21	3
	TOTALS	14	43	–

Thus during the six months from June to December the Charleville itinerants were able to provide mini-school experience for 43 of the 81 primary correspondence students in their area, which is just over 50 per cent. Further details concerning the 'Warrabin' Mini-School were supplied by the Charleville itinerants, and give some indication of the amount of contact time achieved. Formal lessons commenced at 8.30 a.m. and finished at approximately 3.30 p.m., with breaks for recess and lunch totalling one hour and a half, which over a period of 5 days gives a total of 27.5 hours of formal contact time between teachers and students. In addition to this formal lesson time, students and teachers were involved in one hour of organised games each afternoon and one and a half hours of recreational activity each evening.

In reporting on these mini-schools the teachers commented:

As far as our work is concerned, we both feel that there is a great value in the mini-school and that these should be extended in 1979, so that each child in the area has the opportunity to attend one of these week-long schools. All the parents whose children have attended have also been enthusiastic and keen to continue the idea next year.

The mini-school gives the child a wide experience of activities such as art, craft, music, dance, and organised recreation, as well as the basic curriculum subjects. At our Quilpie mini-school, we were fortunate to have the P.C.A.P. Recreation Officer with us to work with the children in orienteering, tennis, gymnastics, square dancing and other activities.

During discussion the teachers explained that the mothers and governesses of some of the students had also attended the mini-schools and given very useful assistance. For instance, at the 'Warrabin' (Quilpie) mini-school two teams of three mothers had undertaken all the cooking.

The Dalton House files contain many letters of appreciation from parents concerning these mini-schools and some extracts from these letters are given below:

The socialising benefits are clearly seen by the confidence with which children are able to mix and perform in group activities.

. . . to thank you wholeheartedly for affording the children such a valuable opportunity for participating in all those activities that are impossible in our own environment.

. . . actual school work was given high priority and this has proved beneficial for those attending.

For the children school work is 'fun', far removed from the monotony of endless correspondence papers, and with a professional teacher to pin-point difficulties, those with troubles could be guided.

I hope the P.C.A.P. Committee will continue to support the use of Itinerant Teachers to conduct this and other mini-schools in the future.

Returning to Table 4, calculations based on these figures give an average teacher/student ratio of 1:6.1, which suggests a more economical use of teacher time in comparison with home visits where the ratio was calculated as 1:1.3. Other advantages would appear to include the greater amount of contact time, the opportunities for extra-curricular activities and socialisation, and reduced travelling time for teachers.

The teachers themselves saw the mini-schools as a particularly rewarding component of their work:

> *The mini-schools we've found to be the most rewarding, because you can do a lot. You get five days – you're working towards something for the end of the week, whereas the itinerant teaching is not nearly as rewarding because you're going – you're here, then you're there, and we haven't got back to people twice yet.*

It is important, however, to stress that home visits and mini-schools are not seen as alternatives, but rather as complementary components of the itinerant service as a whole. The home visit is, for instance, of particular value in the unique opportunities it offers for giving individual assistance to both Home Supervisors and students in their efforts to cope with education through correspondence. Thus all the itinerant teachers and the Project Director were agreed that both home visits and mini-schools should continue as important features of the itinerant service. This view was expressed by the Project Director in the following words:

> *. . . the Home Visits, yes, they will continue and there will be groupings developed, not large groupings, but small groupings. Mini-Schools, I feel, will attain further development in 1979 and (also) the Activity Days, which have a slightly different overall objective, because in the Activity Days I would say that socialisation becomes the dominant kind of objective, whereas the Mini-Schools have multi-objectives, not excluding socialisation by any means.*

STUDENT REPORTS AND THE PRIMARY CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL

As already indicated, one of the services developed by the primary itinerant teachers has been the provision of written reports, to both the Primary Correspondence School and the School of the Air, on students who have received home visits. Since June 1978 printed report forms designed by the Primary Correspondence School have been available for this purpose and used by all except one of the itinerant teachers. Nine major areas in which Primary Correspondence School Teachers have expressed an interest are listed on that form and were used as a basis for the analysis shown in Table 6, where they are reproduced as Report Headings.

An analysis of the reports received during 1978 by the Primary Correspondence School produced the figures shown in the tables below. For purposes of comparison, details of reports received from the Mobile Classroom staff have also been included.

Table 5: Analysis of Reports – Number of Reports, Number of Students, Number of Families, Number of Teachers, etc.

Details	Itinerant Teams			Totals	Mobile Classroom
	Charleville	St George	Cunnamulla		
Total number of children reported on	42	25	22	89	51
Number of students with 1 report	42	24	21	87	43
Number of students with 2 reports	–	1	1	2	8
Number of families	35	21	22	78	38
Total number of reports	42	25	23	90	58
Number of teachers involved	2	2	2	6	2
Average number of reports per teacher	21	12.5	11.5	15	29
Period covered by reports	June–Nov.	May–Nov.	June–Oct.	May–Nov.	Sept–Nov.

It will be seen that the Primary Correspondence School has received, from the itinerant service, 90* reports on 89 students, involving 78 families, and that only 2 students had been reported on twice. This compares with 58 reports on 51 children, involving 38 families, received from the Mobile Classroom. When considering these figures, it is necessary to bear in mind that for most of the period under review the primary itinerant service was staffed by six teachers and the mobile classroom by two. As might be expected, the larger groups of children handled in the mobile classroom situation appear to have resulted in a greater number of reports per teacher.

Table 6 shows details of the numbers and types of comments included in reports. It will be noted that reports received from the primary itinerants provided a total of 913 separate comments, with an average of 10.14 per report compared to 239 separate comments, with an average of 4.12 per report from the Mobile Classroom. The much greater opportunity for evaluating the student, his environment and the Home Supervisor provided by the home visit would presumably account for this difference.

Table 6: Analysis of the Numbers and Types of Comments Included in Reports

Report Heading	Itinerant Service					Mobile Classroom	
	Number of Comments			Total No. of Comments	Average No. per Report	Number of Comments	
	Charleville	St George	Cunnamulla			Total	Average
Extra Duties	26	15	14	55	0.61	26	0.45
Learning Situation	35	18	30	83	0.92	3	0.05
Achievement Levels	45	39	47	131	1.46	47	0.81
Conceptual Skills	1	4	8	13	0.14	3	0.05
Reading	76	40	44	160	1.78	31	0.53
Speaking	53	31	17	101	1.12	28	0.48
Writing	20	18	8	46	0.51	4	0.07
Maths	81	29	20	130	1.44	41	0.71
General	54	65	48	167	1.86	44	0.76
Totals	391	259	236	886	9.84	227	3.91
Other*	19	4	4	27	0.30	12	0.21
Overall Totals	410	263	240	913	10.14	239	4.12

* Refers to comments not readily classifiable under any of the sub-headings appearing on the back of the printed report form.

In the course of discussion, one of the itinerant teachers described the task of writing these reports in the following words:

> *Yes, it was a bit of a burden because after you came back from visiting, you know, for four days, it was a bit of a nuisance to have to sit down and write these reports and you felt, perhaps, you didn't know the child well enough to write a lot of things P.C.S. asked, just on the one visit, you know.*

Nevertheless, all the itinerant teachers were convinced of the value of such reports and accepted the work involved as an important part of their duties. This is reflected in the following representative comments about the completion of such reports:

* It is not clear at present whether this figure represents the full number of reports completed, since the number of reports received by the Correspondence School does not tally with the number of children who received home visits.

They (the Primary Correspondence School teachers) haven't got a really clear picture so it's part of our job to inform them. (Comment relating to the provision of information about the home background and environment.)

They do have an idea, but sometimes it isn't correct — Mother could be helping a bit too much.

We wrote them (the reports) as soon as we got back because we felt it was fresh in our minds then . . . I used to make notes in my diary of the things about the children at the end of the day . . .

I found it (the printed report form) was quite good 'cause you knew what they were after.

As far as the Primary Correspondence School is concerned, the principal usefulness of the itinerant service so far has been in the provision of written reports on the students visited. This is illustrated in the following comments from P.C.S. staff:

Finding out about the background of the family is helpful. I think we need to know all that.

. . . the feedback we've had from them (the itinerants) has been constructive and helpful to our teaching.

They're (the reports) pretty revealing at times.

Very, very helpful. (Comment relating to information about home background.)

In particular, the P.C.S. teachers were agreed upon their need to know more about their students' home background and considered that the itinerants' reports were especially useful in supplying this deficiency. The P.C.S. staff did, however, draw attention to the variable quality of the reports which they received from the P.C.A.P. field staff:

Some people — it's very good, others not so good, it varies.

This criticism was particularly levelled at the lack of detail in some reports and appears to be related to the differences already noted between reports supplied by the Mobile Classroom and those supplied by the Itinerant Teacher Service. Another criticism voiced by the P.C.S. teachers related to the need for itinerants to be fully familiar with the content of the correspondence materials:

Some of them (the itinerants) aren't at all familiar with what's in our papers and the ideas they are using, some of them, are completely against the workings in our papers, which is quite a problem. (Comment relating to the arithmetical methods used at lower primary level.)

For this reason, the P.C.S. staff considered the orientation time spent by the itinerant teachers at the Correspondence School to be of particular value. They also considered that regular visits to the P.C.S. by the P.C.A.P. staff, say twice a year, would be beneficial for the following reasons:

(a) itinerants would have the opportunity to gain greater familiarity with P.C.S. methods and materials;

(b) P.C.S. teachers could discuss individual students and their problems with the itinerants; and
(c) communication generally between the itinerants and the P.C.S. would be much improved.

It may be noted that, at present, apart from the initial orientation visit and informal occasions such as the School of the Air Sports, communication between the primary itinerants and the P.C.S. is almost entirely limited to the written reports on students which is very largely one-way. This contrasts with the style of communication developed between the secondary itinerant and the Secondary Correspondence School which is much more varied in scope and relies heavily on face-to-face contact during the itinerant teacher's regular visits to Brisbane for this purpose.

One suggestion for augmenting the written reports on students was expressed by a member of the P.C.S. staff as follows:

Also, I'd like to have included on tape, with the reports that are given to the school, actual work sessions — the itinerant working with the child — so that we can become aware of how the child thinks and reacts to questions and its general attitudes to the work session.

Overall, the P.C.S. staff were convinced of the value of the itinerant service, as the following representative comments show:

I think that the exercise of itinerants has been very valuable . . .

The idea of itinerants is a very good one . . .

There should be more (itinerant teachers) in the field; there should be extensions of the whole thing.

I see personal contact (between itinerant and student) as the best way we could be using that money.

There was, however, some concern about the staffing of the Itinerant Teacher Service, with particular regard to the relatively high turnover which has been experienced. This was seen as detrimental to the effectiveness of the service, although the difficulty of retaining staff, on temporary conditions of employment, in remote country areas was appreciated. The P.C.S. staff suggested that desirable qualities in itinerant teachers were professional competence and experience, tact and some understanding of life in remote country areas.

REACTIONS TO THE SERVICE

Reactions relating to particular components of the service have already been included in earlier sections of this report and the principal concern here will be with reactions to the service as a whole.

The itinerant teachers themselves perceive general reactions to the service as extremely positive and this is reflected in the following remarks recorded during interview:

They really want us. There really is a need for itinerant teachers. The kids love it and the parents are all very pleased with it.

Some indication of community reaction to the itinerants is provided by the concern expressed by residents in the Cunnamulla area when the service was curtailed towards the end of 1978 owing to the resignation of one of the teachers. A special combined meeting of the Cunnamulla Local Advisory Committee and the Isolated Children's Parents' Association was held to voice this concern and the Project Director was invited to attend. The tenor of this meeting left no doubt about the extent of local appreciation of the service. The following comments, recorded at that meeting, are typical:

It's (the itinerant service) too good to lose.

. . . it's just that it's got so much going for it that I'd hate to see the whole thing fall through.

Finally, towards the end of 1978, the Project Director invited Local Advisory Committees to assist in the evaluation of the Priority Country Area Program through submitting evaluatory comments on those initiatives with which they were familiar. The following extract, which refers to the Itinerant Teacher Service, is taken from the report supplied by the Cunnamulla Local Advisory Committee, on 10 October 1978, in response to that invitation:

The general opinion was that these teachers are filling a great need in this area and most certainly should become a permanent part of Rural Education.

CONSTRAINTS AND PROBLEM AREAS

Low population densities and vast distances are, of course, major reasons why the south-west of Queensland was declared a Priority Country Area. Taking the 1978 figure of 164 families with children on primary correspondence courses, scattered throughout this area of some 320,000 km^2, an average population density of 1 correspondence family to every 1951 km^2 is obtained. This figure gives some indication of the travel problems facing the three itinerant teams, particularly in connection with Home Visits and helps to explain why, in a six-month period, the Charleville-based itinerants were able to visit only 77 per cent of the children in their area. Dirt roads and unpredictable weather are other factors, since there were 12 days in this period when their itinerary was affected by rain. It seems reasonable to suppose that, if their itinerary had been unaffected by weather, they might have been able to reach the remaining 11 families that did not receive a Home Visit in the second half of 1978. Since during the same six-month period, the Charleville-based itinerants were also able to involve only 50 per cent of their children in Mini-Schools, it would appear that, if these figures are typical, the maximum service which could be offered, on present staffing ratios, in a full year may be no more than two Home Visits and one Mini-School for each child. The number of Activity Days is less predictable because it is dependent to some extent on the degree of parental initiative forthcoming.

Of relevance here is the opinion of the Charleville itinerants, expressed in the course of discussion, that they should be aiming at a ratio of 75 per cent of their time on itinerary compared to 25 per cent in the office. It may be noted that if the 12 days affected by rain during 1978 had been spent on itinerary then they would have finally achieved a ratio of 65 per cent to 35 per cent. Also, since both these teachers were newly appointed in May 1978, greater experience and less exceptional weather conditions could certainly be expected to result in better ratios than the 55 per cent to 45 per cent, actually achieved during the period under consideration.

However, even if a ratio of 75 per cent itinerary time to 25 per cent office time were to prove feasible, it would still seem unlikely that the three Home Visits per year (one each term), originally envisaged by the field staff, for each correspondence family could be achieved. The 1978 figures show that in 39 days the Charleville-based team reached 43 families through Home Visits. On this basis, to have provided three visits to each family in the area would have taken 147 days, or 70 per cent of the total number of school days, leaving only 5 per cent or 10.5 working days for Mini-Schools, Activity Days, Summer Schools, etc. Judging from this experience a more realistic target would appear to be two Home Visits for each family in a year, with the possibility of an extra visit where there is need.

A significant problem, already touched upon in the course of this report, is that of the relatively high turnover of itinerant staff. Thus from its inception in 1977 up to December 1978 six teachers had joined and later left the project, after giving an average of six months service. Of the two continuing, one had completed seven months and the other nine. The Project Director commented on this problem in the following statement:

> *We are suffering what schools in the area suffer, but we're suffering it to a greater extent. Schools in the area together with P.C.A.P. team personnel have a high turnover rate. Our turnover rate is higher even than in the established schools. High turnovers are detrimental to the schools' undertaking and the higher turnover rate which we're encountering is unfortunately more detrimental to what we're undertaking.*

Consideration of the circumstances surrounding the departure of the six teachers who have already left the project may help in understanding this high rate of turnover. Thus the two original itinerants, who were on secondment from the State Service, were both transferred back to school postings at their own request. Of those recruited on temporary conditions of employment during 1978, two left for personal reasons, a third to complete a postgraduate qualification at a College of Advanced Education and the fourth to take up a permanent position with the Department of Education. The temporary conditions of employment, consequent upon the pilot nature of P.C.A.P. projects, are seen as a contributory factor by many people. This view was expressed by the Chairman of the Cunnamulla Local Advisory Committee as follows:

> *. . . therein lies one of the problems, that these teachers haven't got any kind of permanency as regards employment and so if a permanent position is offered to one of them obviously they're going to take it.*

Other reasons for high turnover rates may include the exhausting nature of the duties and the curtailment of normal social life caused by the weeks spent on itinerary. Such reasons were stressed by three of the six past and present itinerants interviewed, and are illustrated by the following comments from those interviews:

You come back so completely wiped out, you really do, it's really exhausting.

You're being deprived of a lot of the social activities in a small town.

Because of this, all except one of the itinerants considered twelve months to be a reasonable period of itinerant service, with two years as an outside limit. Related to this was a feeling amongst the itinerants that the long working hours and exhausting nature of the duties during Home Visits and Mini-Schools should receive special recognition:

And we feel there should be something built in about that now – a certain number of nights out gives you a day or a certain number of hours or something.

The thing that we're starting to feel we need now, is time off in lieu, actually . . . We're just going to start applying now because we realise you've just got to have it really to keep people at the job longer.

With regard to transport, the itinerants were reasonably satisfied with the present arrangement of one vehicle for each team of two teachers in St George and Cunnamulla. Some friction was reported in one instance, but appeared to be attributable more to a clash of personalities within the team than to any problems inherent in the existing transport arrangements. In Charleville the situation was less satisfactory, with two vehicles being shared by the Project Director, the secondary itinerant, the Recreation Officer and the two primary itinerants. The Charleville-based team also drew attention to the need for station wagons in place of sedans if the Mini-Schools are to be further developed, because of the need for increased carrying capacity when catering for larger numbers of pupils over longer periods of time.

Further discussions with the itinerant teachers did not, however, reveal any strong demand for the provision of vehicles with four-wheel drive, although as the Project Director has pointed out the issue is not clear cut. Thus despite the existing policy of avoiding travel during periods of bad weather several instances have occurred where the possession of four-wheel drive would have been advantageous. It is also possible that home visit itineraries might suffer fewer interruptions if vehicles with four-wheel drive were available. Overall it is a question of balancing the usefulness of four-wheel drive on unmade roads and tracks against the advantages of the present sedans for long distance travel on roads with good surfaces. Additional cost is another consideration.

CONCLUSIONS

The orientation process as presently organised is seen as generally useful by the itinerant teachers and the organisers, all of whom wished to see it continued.

Although minor differences of approach exist, the itinerants share a common view of their role, which they feel is well accepted by parents. On the evidence collected so far, the teachers, Home Supervisors and students appear to be satisfied with the type of program, developed during 1978, incorporating Home Visits, Mini-Schools and Activity Days, and the intention to continue development along these lines during 1979 appears to be reasonable. 1978 experience does, however, indicate the desirability of continuing itinerant

support where parents undertake the organisation of Activity Day programs.

Based on the Charleville experience, however, the present level of staffing may be barely adequate to provide a service incorporating two Home Visits (totalling 9 hours contact), one Mini-School (27 hours formal contact) and a limited number of Activity Days per student per year. Even to provide this level of service an improved ratio of itinerary time to office time, compared to that achieved during 1978, would be needed. Certainly, a target of two Home Visits each year would appear more realistic than the three originally envisaged, although even this goal could prove elusive in the face of unpredictables such as staff change, bad weather and sickness. The careful planning of itineraries, taking into account overall annual intentions, could be a crucial factor in this regard.

The written reports on students supplied by the itinerant service appear to be much appreciated by the staff of the Primary Correspondence School, particularly for the background information which they supply about the student's environment. The value of the Home Visit in making possible a more detailed report appears to have been clearly established through comparison with the Mobile Classroom. The suggestion that the itinerant teachers should visit the Primary Correspondence School, say twice a year, merits serious consideration.

Although there is general agreement that the high rate of staff turnover is undesirable, this may have to be accepted as an inevitable feature of a pilot project where duties are demanding, postings remote and conditions of employment temporary. In this regard, the question of 'time off in lieu' may merit some clarification.

Turning to transport, it appears that the existing arrangements have been reasonably satisfactory, except for complications in Charleville, although a case could be made for supplying station wagons instead of sedans when the existing vehicles come up for replacement. In the meantime, fuller investigation of transport problems would seem desirable, with particular reference to the question of vehicles with four-wheel drive.

Overall, almost without exception, reactions to the Primary Itinerant Service appear to have been extremely favourable and a high level of demand for its continuation could be anticipated.

ISSUES

A number of issues which can be identified as arising from the contents of this report are listed below:

1. *Level of Service*
   With the existing staff level it appears possible to contact each family three times a year, through two Home Visits and one Mini-School. The duration of contact is usually four to five hours during a Home Visit and five days during a Mini-School. Any increase in frequency and/or duration of contact would require additional staff.

2. *Responding to Requests for Special Visits*
At present, teachers prepare their itineraries and parents are notified subsequently. As yet there have been no instances of parents requesting assistance, but this could arise as people become more familiar with the service. The existing organisation would have difficulty in meeting specific requests from parents for special visits.

3. *Effectiveness of Contact*
This preliminary report has given some indication of the amount of contact time achieved during Home Visits and Mini-Schools, but at present there is very limited information available about the effectiveness of this contact time. It is suggested that this question of the quality of the service is an issue of prime importance which should be probed during the second stage of evaluation.

3. *The Itinerant Teacher Service in Perspective*
This report contains a number of references to relationships between the Itinerant Teacher Service and the other educational services which cater for country children, such as the Primary Correspondence School, the School of the Air and the Isolated Children's Special Education Unit. Amongst these services, the correspondence lessons, which in themselves provide a full course of primary education, clearly occupy the central position. The Itinerant Teacher Service has thus to develop a role as one of several supplementary or support services available to isolated families. Further evaluation of its impact within this context would appear to be desirable.

5. *Orientation Procedures*
These appear to have been reasonably satisfactory, but have had to be frequently repeated owing to high staff turnover. Apart from the comments of some participants, no data exist about their effectiveness and further investigation is indicated.

6. *Staff Turnover*
There is a high rate of staff turnover, which has an adverse effect upon the continuity and efficiency of the service. It appears that either this has to be accepted as a part of the pilot nature of the project or some provision, such as an increased staffing ratio, must be made to absorb the ill effects of staff change.

S. R. HAMPSON, Government Printer, Queensland